6: McFee E-4,5 (1959-1967) 1972 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

jobs to make enough to live on, so they took my cattle. Just didn't have enough land for farming or ranching.

—a seasonally employed construction worker, 1/16 Blackfeet.

I have about thirty-five head I'm running with family stock on other people's land. These are loan cattle. I've been taking five to ten head a year and haven't been pressed for payment. Just pay them back when I can. The family helps take care of them. I want to lease some land but I find it hard to do. The Indian gets priority but somehow it seems hard to get land away from the white lease-holders.

—a regularly employed carpenter, ¼ Blackfeet.

I was raised on a ranch. Before the war I was living and working for my uncle who had cattle. I had some loan cattle and was just getting started. Then I was called into the Army. They only kept me six months, but no one would take care of my cattle while I was gone so I turned back the loan cattle and sold the rest. After the war I came to town and worked for wages.

—an irregularly employed laborer, full-blood.

This is the way these men see the problems, and whether or not they are correct in their appraisal is beside the point. The important thing is that, for various reasons, many men failed to make a go of ranching and farming while a few others did. The successful ones appear to have had family support. Only by cooperation, in which some of the family took wage earning jobs while others tended the ranch, were most enterprises kept going.

The pressure for ending trust status of Indian land culminated in the adoption of House Concurrent Resolution 108 in 1953 calling for the "earliest possible" termination of federal responsibilities over specified Indian tribes (U.S. Congr. Record XCIX, 8, 1953:9968). The Blackfeet were not included among the Indians to be "freed," but the resolution was interpreted as a statement of intent to end rapidly the trust status of all Indians. In response to this resolution, the

> issuance of patents in fee nearly doubled as compared with the previous year . . . while the disposition of allotted holdings through advertised sale more than tripled . . . (U.S. Sec't. Interior 1953:24).

A brief moratorium in effect during 1958 was lifted the following year "in compliance with a congressional request. . . ." (U.S. Sec't. Interior 1959:253). The Blackfeet continued to lose reservation land to nonmembers.

While federal and tribal authorities were attempting to increase the industrial capacity of the reservation, other forces were working against them. The population was growing—from the 3,921 resident members in 1941 to 4,850 in 1960 to more than 6,000 by 1970. The increasing number of Blackfeet who had left the reservation often included the most educated.[11] The land sales and continued fractionization of allotments through inheritance procedures made land consolidation and utilization increasingly difficult. The trend toward larger farms

[11] This out-migration continues, largely because there are few opportunities on the reservation for turning learning into income. Weber tried to find a correlation between schooling and income among his Babb sample and concluded that for making money ". . . in a community with very few jobs other than those demanding physical labor, comparative youth and vigor are more important than variations in schooling" (1969:16).

6: McFee E-4,5 (1959-1967) 1972 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

and ranches increased the need for additional capital, but funds were not available to meet the demand. Periods of declining employment, that is the recession of 1957–1959, cut into individual earnings from wage labor. No new proven oil fields had been tapped, and interest in oil exploration decreased. When individual and tribal earnings fell off, the demand for welfare funds increased. The council contributed the greatest share to the county welfare program, so the relief the people received was yet another drain upon tribal income.

Tribal self-government suffered under these pressures. It was difficult to get a majority of the tribe to support any political or economic measure. The council, itself split on issues, despaired of tribal unity:

> Members of the Blackfeet Tribe are generally very poor. Their income is meager and consists mostly of income from leased trust land, casual labor, and participation in Tribal programs operated with Tribal income.
>
> It is very difficult to convince these people that Tribal income should be assigned for any purpose. Most of our people see only the spectre of having their income, and consequently Tribal programs and their direct benefits, diverted into programs designed for only more progressive members of the Tribe. To these people, it is a matter of personal survival. Any possible reduction in Tribal income to them automatically means a reduction in personal income.
>
> . . . until at least thirty per cent of the adult population of the Tribe becomes self-supporting and thus able to plan and to think in terms of the future, it appears that programs requiring popular approval for use of locally supervised Tribal funds will certainly be limited to those programs which meet the daily emergency needs of members of the Blackfeet Tribe. (Letter from the Secretary of the Blackfeet Tribal Business Council to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, March 3, 1960, Blackfeet Tribal Council Documents.)

Consequently, long-range programs were often deferred, per capita payments were made, and in most cases, the recipients spent the money for immediate needs.

The pessimism reflected above should be tempered, however. Even as he wrote the letter, the tribal secretary and other councilmen were working on plans for improving the housing on the reservation. Following councils, in face of continuing criticism by many tribal members, invested money in programs to develop tribal resources and provide more opportunities for employment on the reservation: one of the first fruits of this effort was the establishment of the Blackfeet Forest Products Enterprises in 1963. This group was funded by the tribe in the amount of $10,000 and given the authority to lease a mill site and to award a franchise for the erection and operation of a sawmill to a private operator. The mill was to hire local help and to use logs cut by Blackfeet labor from the tribal timber holdings. Mill operations have suffered from breakdowns because of the age of the equipment acquired; several operators have taken the concession and given it up in the face of difficulties; but the mill continues to operate, troubles are being ironed out, and the hours of work available to local men has gradually increased to the point that the sawmill and attendant timber cutting operations appear to be a small but important prop to the local economy.

With a tribal investment of both land and money, and a loan from the U.S. Economic Development Administration, the Business Council has developed an industrial park adjacent to the railroad just south of Browning. The council,

10: Lewis E-4 (no date) 1973 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

The ownership of horses had still further importance, for horses were used as capital, earning interest for the owner in the form of a "gift" of additional horses or equivalent property from the borrower. When a man had a number of horses over and above the domestic needs of his family, the surplus could be loaned out. With the accumulation of large herds this lending of horses became general. Horses were borrowed for use in hunting and war parties. The borrower had to give in return one half of the game killed, and one half of the loot captured.[171] In this way, owners of huge herds, who had long given up the war path, could replenish their supply of horses by frequently lending them to poor young men.

A large surplus of horses was not necessary for lending. Men who were too old to hunt and old women who had no relatives upon whom to rely, could secure food and clothing for themselves if they owned but two horses. Horses were looked upon as a source of security in one's old age, a point often repeated to young men.

Horses were also in demand at the trading posts and were used by the Blackfoot to pay for goods, ammunition, liquor, tobacco, and other supplies. As we have seen, the Blackfoot never took to the trapping of small game on a large scale. They had few furs for exchange before the 1830's and relied upon horses almost from the start. Blackfoot horse trading was carried on as early as 1774, as shown by Cocking.[172] This need for horses, both for the tribal economy and for trading purposes, gave continual impetus to horse-stealing parties.

The organization of a raiding party was a purely individual affair. A party was organized by the man who wished to be the leader. He notified a number of carefully selected men of his intentions and arranged for a meeting at which the plans would be discussed. Participation in a raiding party was determined by rank, equipment, and the relationship to the leader. The party normally was composed of members of one band; brothers and brothers-in-law were a favorite raiding unit for they could thereby keep the horses in the family. The leader never invited a man superior to him in war record nor would such a man raid under him. Similarly, a poor man would not attempt to lead a group of wealthier men, even though they were younger.[173] A man of high status, whether it be in terms of war record,

[171] The rigidity of the interest concept could not be ascertained, though all informants insisted upon the fifty percent principle. Probably much depended upon the relationship of the "contracting" parties. A somewhat different arrangement is reported by Jane Richardson for the Northern Blackfoot. Here the hired men under the famous chief, Crowfoot, gave him the entire loot and catch in return for which they were fed and clothed by the chief and received some horses upon their marriage. See J. Richardson, *Northern Blackfoot*, Mss.

[172] Cocking, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

[173] A poor man, "kimataps" is one who has not or never had any valuable property or religious articles. A man with a good war record would not be called "kimataps" though he may have little or no property.

13: Robbins E-4,5 (1967-1970) 1972 NF6 Blackfoot NF6
Piegan
Montana

Diagram IV

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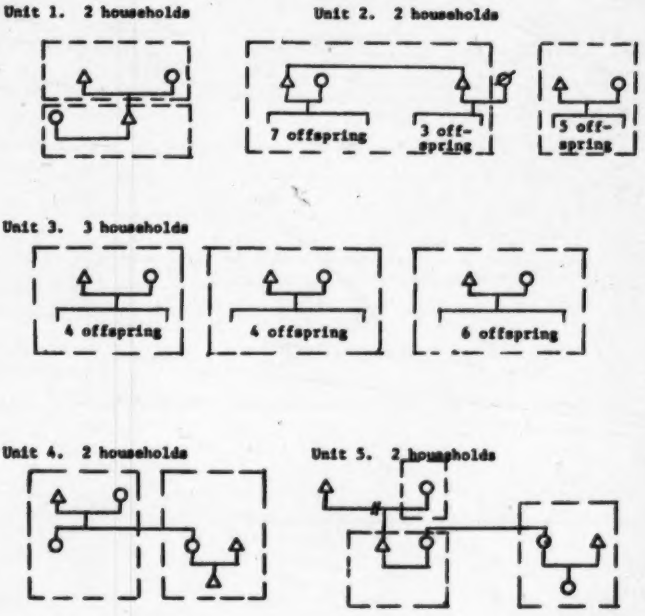
SIXTEEN FARMING AND RANCHING CO-OPS, HEART BUTTE DISTRICT, 1921*



592
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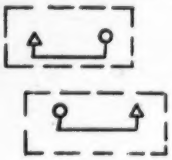
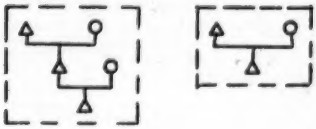
Diagram IV (Continued)

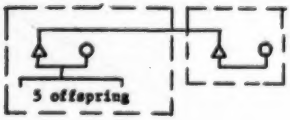
Unit 6. 2 households



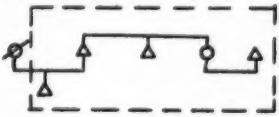
Unit 7. 2 households



Unit 8. 2 households



Unit 9. 1 household



Unit 10. 6 households

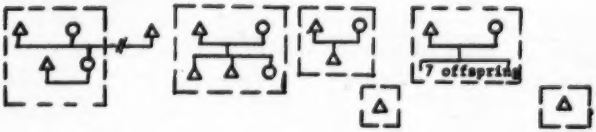


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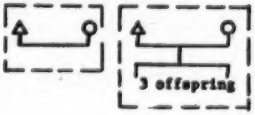
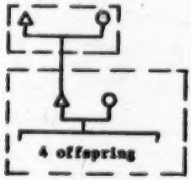
Diagram IV (Continued)

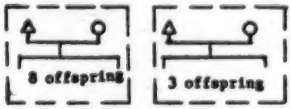
Unit 11. 2 households



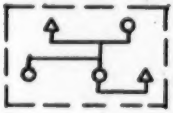
Unit 12. 2 households



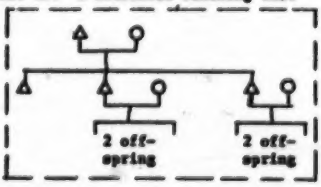
Unit 13. 2 households



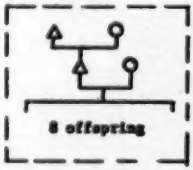
Unit 14. 1 household



Unit 15. 1 household ranching unit



Unit 16. 1 household



*These are multiple and single family units, household boundaries are outlined in broken lines.

13: Robbins E-4,5 (1967-1970) 1972 NF6 Blackfoot NF6
Piegan
Montana

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Diagram V

TWENTY-ONE FARMING AND RANCHING CO-OPS,
OLD AGENCY DISTRICT, 1921*

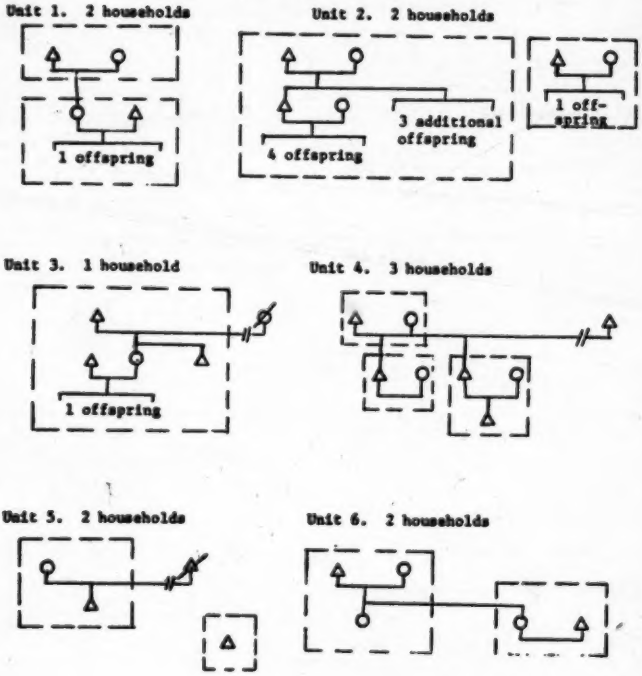

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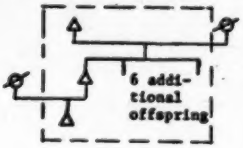
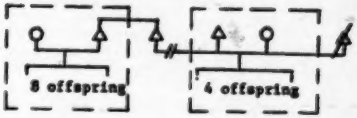
Diagram V (Continued)

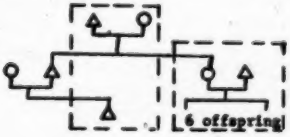
Unit 7. 1 household



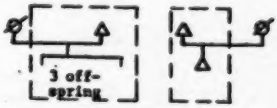
Unit 8. 2 households



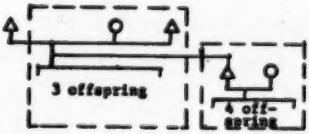
Unit 9. 2 households



Unit 10. 2 households



Unit 11. 2 households



Unit 12. 2 households

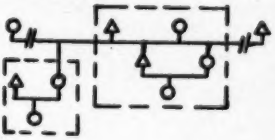


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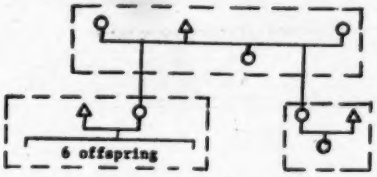
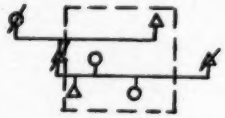
Diagram V (Continued)

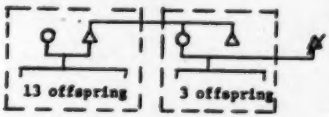
Unit 13. 3 households--polygynous household in ascending generation.



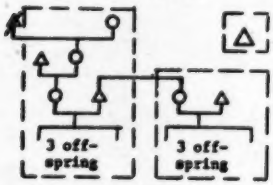
Unit 14. 1 household



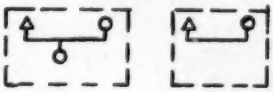
Unit 15. 2 households



Unit 16. 3 households



Unit 17. 2 households



592
454
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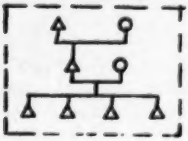
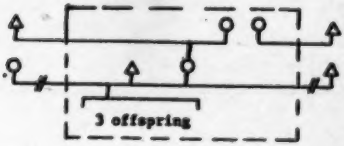
Diagram V (Continued)

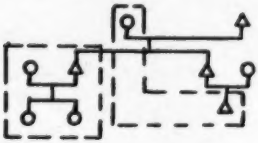
Unit 18. 1 household



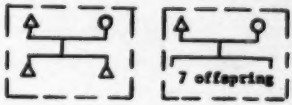
Unit 19. 1 household



Unit 20. 2 households



Unit 21. 2 households



*These are multiple and single family units. Household boundaries are outlined by broken lines.

563
241

Of the nine males married to allotted Blackfeet women, six managed acreages on Birch Creek and three on Lower Two Medicine. The farming and ranching operations between the two locations were relatively prosperous and show no major difference in the number of acres under control or cattle kept, as is shown in the following table (Table 12).

563
241
423
128

As further evidence that lower Two Medicine and Birch Creek were the two most prosperous locations, I present additional data in Table 13, to show that no full-bloods were farming the best acreages and that only those of one-half or less Blackfeet ancestry had somehow managed to acquire control of these more productive locations.

[129]

The farmers and ranchers listed in the two tables are the nineteen most prosperous allottees or spouses of allottees recorded in the 1921 Old Agency survey volume. These allottees and their spouses were

563
241

clearly the most industrious and were in the proper locations for such undertakings. Agents who served before Campbell often commented that full-bloods were reluctant to farm, yet I believe the data presented in this chapter argue that many full-blood household heads did attempt to farm in rather high percentages (they made up 52 per cent of farmers in

563
241
491

the Old Agency District). But, for reasons already given, they were not able to obtain sufficient capitalization to make their work truly profitable. Because of this, it is the full-bloods who were largely forced to joint co-ops, form multiple-family households, and struggle to

[118]

realize a materially meager existence. This pattern prevails today, although it also involves many persons who are less than full-blood.

[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 92]

Chapter IV, which analyses a sample of Browning households, demonstrates a continuing low-order status of full-bloods in employment.

I do not know the status of the reservation lands in general in 1921, nor do I know the number of outsiders who leased reservation land or the acres these families used. I do know that many acres had been sold by allottees declared competent and who had been granted fee patent on their land. Nonetheless, I do not know how many white ranchers were leasing Indian lands in the two districts analyzed in this chapter and therefore I am unable to make any generalizations about who controlled most of the available strategic land resources. I do know, as explained and analyzed below, that of the tribal allottees who were engaged in farming and ranching the white male spouses of these allottees or near white allottees (one-half, one-eighth Blackfeet) controlled or owned by far the greater portion of the cultivated acres, domesticated animals, and available farming equipment and the best available land.

But in spite of these presumed "successful" farmers and ranchers, one cannot escape the realization that even 200 acres simply could not continue to serve an individual family in the United States economy. Agricultural and ranching enterprises have demanded greater and greater capital, and the emphasis today is on large outlays of funds for equipment and animals, and large tracts of land. The farm subsidy program is designed to award massive operations rather than small family farms (see Nelson 1954).

Furthermore, even the lower Two Medicine and Birch Creek areas,

once seemingly profitable regions for farming, did not prove to be so for single, small enterprises because of the vicissitudes of weather (low rainfall, spring flooding from snow melt) and repeated thefts and depredations of homesites and stock in the absence of owners. Weather was without question one of the major causes of the decline and eventual abandonment of farming, but the underlying trend toward greater concentrations of capital certainly played a critical role. In the Mountain States in 1950, for example, a 1,000 acre farm was a family farm (Nelson 1954: 21). From 1920 to 1950 the average size of Mountain States farms increased from 481 acres to 1,284 acres. No farm of this size, to my knowledge, existed or exists in the districts sampled in this study. In the Lower Two Medicine and Birch Creek areas there are a few cattle ranches but I know of only one; it is operated by a mixed-blood who manages about 200 head of cattle. As for the depredations on homesites mentioned earlier, these were often conducted by unemployed mixed-bloods who sought to rustle a few cattle and steal household goods for quick gain rather than to enlarge existing herds.

A brief look at agricultural land use on the Blackfeet reservation sheds considerable light on present conditions. In 1960 non-Indians held 75 grazing leases totalling 380,025 acres at an average of 5,067 acres (BIA 1961). If these stockmen are following BIA prescribed range use (20 acres per animal) the average number of stock comes to just over 250 for each rancher, 50 head above the estimated number of livestock needed to support a family. In the same year, 150 Indian stockmen (degree of Indian unknown) used 399,900 acres, average acreage per operator being 2,666. This comes to an average of 133 livestock,

when Congress might order the termination of Blackfeet local government (H.R. 1916, S, 1914; S, 1917; S, 1918; NA 1916b; 41 Stat. 3). 159 667 663 423

Hamilton's success in helping obtain a second round of allotments for the Blackfeet was tempered by a personal set-back in 1919. Hamilton's prominence on the reservation and the legal background he acquired while working with Mark Baldwin had, years before, led to his appointment as a United States commissioner. The appointment lasted but one year, when it was discovered that Hamilton was accepting fees for his work. United States commissioners were salaried officials. Although Hamilton's fees were illegal, it was apparently done without fraudulent intent. He had never drawn his salary as commissioner and apparently thought his income from the office was derived from fees similar to the system used for clerks in federal courts. In 1919, a jury found him innocent of wrong doing, but he lost his position as commissioner (FRC, 1919). 159 662 663 461

Far more detrimental to the well-being of the Blackfeet was the consequence of the European war and postwar economic dislocation on the reservation's cattle industry. Authorities had long recognized that the Blackfoot Reservation was primarily suited to cattle and sheep grazing. The Allotment Act of 1907 had recognized the reservation's limitations for crop agriculture when alloting the principal part of it for grazing. Since the mid-1890s the federal government, using Blackfoot funds acquired from land sales, distributed cattle to adult tribal members. By 1910, the Blackfoot cattle herds through further distributions and natural increase were large enough to predict a reasonable level of success for the enterprise. A series of drought years and severe winters between 1900 and 1908 retarded the development of the industry, but sufficient stock remained to ensure recovery. The development of irrigated hay fields appeared to solve the problem of winter feed. 433 657 178 433 657 233

The government cattle program, however, had the effect of enriching a few Blackfeet while most languished. Full-blood members of the tribe continued to take more pride in their horse herds than in cattle. Mixed bloods found it relatively 657 233 184 411 ● [431]

easy to barter Indian ponies for cattle. Consequently, Blackfoot cattle tended to end up in the hands of a few aggressive entrepreneurs. As early as 1902, only 47 Blackfeet had substantial cattle herds. The Office of Indian Affairs was aware of the monopolizing process on the reservation and acted to reverse the trend (NA, 1903).

The cattle question on the Blackfoot Reservation placed the government in a dilemma. The government tried to foster both the tribe's collective economic advancement and self-enterprise among individual members. The more ambitious, however, by their very aggressiveness, tended to defeat the government's effort to raise the general level of economic self-sufficiency. In a sense, the government was too successful in introducing capitalism to the Blackfeet, and it never solved the problem of reconciling an economic system based on creating winners and losers with a commitment to preventing losses. The reality that not every Blackfoot tribal member could be a successful entrepreneur did not mesh with government programs. Furthermore, intervention ensured discontent from every faction on the reservation.

The problem was further compounded by increasing pressure on the Office of Indian Affairs to establish grazing leases for outside cattlemen. Nearby ranchers had already found they could make individual arrangements with Blackfoot tribal members and bring their cattle onto the reservation. A grazing lease system was required to bring the problem of trespass cattle under control. Until the Blackfeet enlarged their cattle herds sufficiently to use the entire reservation, leasing to outside cattlemen appeared a reasonable method to increase Blackfoot income. At the same time the government was reluctant to tie up large amounts of reservation land in leases that might soon be allotted. Consequently, the government instituted a "permit system" on the reservation rather than a lease system. The permit system had the added advantage from the agent's point of view of not requiring approval from the tribal council.

Although the permit system had been instituted while Hamilton was away from the reser

vation and before the establishment of a business committee, it became a central issue in his campaign to secure more authority for the tribe over its own future. Objections to the permit system also gained Hamilton support from both full bloods and mixed bloods. The permit system established a fee of $1.00 a head for a fixed number of cattle to range without restriction on the Blackfoot Reservation. For the Blackfeet the government imposed the same fee for number of cattle in excess of one hundred head. Mixed bloods with large cattle herds protested paying any fee. Full bloods were equally resentful since the fee restricted their ability to trade cattle for horses. What the government had viewed as an insidious process of monopolization was viewed quite differently by the Blackfeet. Full bloods took little umbrage with their mixed blood relatives' penchant for acquiring cattle so long as it allowed them to continue a life-style they cherished above the ownership of beef cattle. Hamilton understood the full blood's attachment to an older pace of life and resented the government's interference (NA, 1902b, 1904a, 1904b; 1904c).

With little ability to monitor the system, the government program had little practical effect. Full bloods and mixed bloods simply evaded the regulations. Later, in 1908, the Office of Indian Affairs modified the permit system charging a fee to the Blackfeet only for cattle that were not part of the government's distribution program. Cattle carrying the Interior Department ID brand were not charged, while "straight" cattle were charged a fee for any number. The new program encouraged Blackfeet with large herds to brand all of their cattle with the ID brand, thus escaping the fee. Branding cattle with the ID brand, however, also reduced their ability to sell the cattle since ID cattle could be sold only with the agent's permission (FRC, 1908).

Hamilton had little difficulty organizing general resistance to the government's program and in uniting mixed bloods and full bloods in the effort. By 1915, the general evasion of the program forced the government to return to a leasing system. With World War I already in progress in Europe the market price for cattle increased, and

that looked toward self-sufficiency. It was an idea that had had some appeal in the frontier conditions of the nineteenth century, but could hardly anticipate economic advancement in the integrated national economy of the twentieth century. 159 657 433 179

Campbell's method of implementing his program was even more disturbing for Hamilton. The superintendent established a series of regional farm chapters on the reservation. The farm chapters organized the farming efforts of the full bloods and acted as cooperatives for equipment purchases. They also became local political clubs, where tribal members discussed general questions of reservation policy and arrived at decisions. Hamilton chafed under Campbell's domination of the farm chapters and the diminished role of the business committee (NA, 1922c, 1924a, 1924b). 159 657 179 471

Campbell had also moved to regularize the election of council members and established election districts along the same lines as the regional farm chapters. His influence with the farm chapters undoubtedly gave him some control over the election of council members. Since the council's authority was restricted principally to matters of tribal enrollment and approving leases, Hamilton found that real decisions about the use of tribal resources tended to drift away from the council and to Campbell's farm chapters. It also meant that tribal resources that might have been used to develop the mineral potential of the reservation were diverted to the subsistence agricultural program. 159 657 666 159 657 179 471

Through Hamilton's urging, the tribal council had pressured the Department of the Interior to approve the first oil and gas lease on the reservation in 1922, which went to Louis Hill of the Great Northern Railroad. The Hill lease had been loosely written and resulted in little exploration. Hamilton urged that the Blackfeet with the aid of the Geological Survey conduct its own exploration, while the Department of the Interior pressed for outside leases with such restrictions that no company was willing to engage in the effort. Another decade passed before oil discoveries of a commercial nature brought some relief 159 657 179

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